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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 006435

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/29/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: PALACE BRINGS EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF PARLIAMENT  
TO AN END

REF: A. AMMAN 06160

[B](#). AMMAN 04953

[C](#). AMMAN 03348

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale for Reasons 1.5 (b),(d)

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SUMMARY

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[1](#)1. (C) Just as MPs were being criticized for not getting their work done, the Palace surprised them with a snap adjournment of their summer extraordinary session. With most decision makers traveling with the King, there has been little clarity on the strategy behind the adjournment. A second extraordinary session limited to economic items will likely be convened later this summer, though it should not exceed two weeks in duration. There is speculation that the upcoming regular session may not be held until after Ramadan revelry and perhaps not until December 1 (the maximum delay allowed by the constitution). End Summary.

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THAT'S A WRAP!  
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[1](#)2. (C) The palace issued a royal decree July 20 directing Parliament, which had convened in an extraordinary session on June 5 (see refs b, c), to adjourn as of that date. According to Sufian Al-Hassan, Director of Research and Information for the Parliament, this step was taken even though MPs had voted on only 23 of the 64 laws specified in King Abdullah's decree convening the session. The Secretary General of the Lower House of Parliament, Faiz Al-Shawabkeh, told PolOff that he was surprised by the decision as he had expected the session to last until August. Many Lower House MPs were likewise caught off guard with a few complaining to PolOff that they should have been given more time to reduce the considerable backlog of provisional laws waiting for parliamentary action. "They criticize us for not making enough progress in passing laws," said MP Mohammad Al-Shawabkeh (East Banker, Madaba), "and then they go ahead and do this."

[1](#)3. (C) One major factor in the adjournment decision is the likelihood of convening a second extraordinary session later this summer. Shawabkeh and Hassan told PolOff July 28 that the GOJ is anxious for Parliament to approve "important economic legislation" related to investment that was not listed in the decree authorizing the first extraordinary session and therefore could not be added to the agenda. Both men said that a ministerial meeting was planned on or about July 31 to select the laws for the agenda and that a second summer session would not exceed two weeks in duration.

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GIVING IN TO REALITY  
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[1](#)4. (C) According to the Jordanian constitution, Parliament must convene for regular sessions in the fall on October 1. This date can be postponed for a maximum of two months (i.e., until December 1). Recently the Jordanian press has speculated that this fall's regular session will be delayed until after Ramadan concludes on or about November 15. Shawabkeh agreed with press reports that a postponement was "very possible" and said that November 20 was a date he had heard tossed around by Jordanian officials. Hassan confided to PolOff that a delay was being considered because MPs were "worthless" during Ramadan, being too tired, hungry and irritable (from not smoking) during the day, and too "stuffed" from overeating in the evenings. He mentioned November 27 or later as a possible start date for the regular session as MPs "need at least a week to recover from the Eid holiday ending Ramadan."

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COMMENT  
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[1](#)5. (C) The 23 laws debated by Parliament during the abbreviated extraordinary session fell far short of the 64 laws on the agenda, but compare favorably with the approximately 40 laws that Parliament took action on during its most recent (and considerably longer) regular session.

Much of the legislation was administrative or business-related in nature and approved with little controversy, with the notable exception of a new human rights law (ref b) and the rejected personal status law (ref a), which represented the government's only real defeat. MPs will have to be more focused, and avoid a penchant for grandstanding and long-winded statements, if they are serious about eliminating the remaining backlog of almost 150 provisional laws. On the GOJ's part, its agenda for the session was overly ambitious from the start. Ali Hindawi, Director of the Parliament Unit at the Prime Ministry, told PolOff in June that he didn't expect MPs to address more than 30 laws, while Hassan complained that the GOJ had not even provided Parliament with the written text of all 64 laws on the agenda.

HALE